

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0198319		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	12/08/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	02/01/1999
<b>Decision Date:</b>	01/26/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	10/22/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	11/25/2014

### HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to an expert reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Physical Medicine Rehabilitation, has a subspecialty in Pain Medicine and is licensed to practice in California. He/she has been in active clinical practice for more than five years and is currently working at least 24 hours a week in active practice. The expert reviewer was selected based on his/her clinical experience, education, background, and expertise in the same or similar specialties that evaluate and/or treat the medical condition and disputed items/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

### CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

This is a patient with a date of injury of February 1, 1999. A utilization review determination dated October 22, 2014 recommends non-certification of aquatic therapy. Non-certification is recommended due to lack of documentation supporting the need for a reduced weight bearing exercise environment. A progress report dated September 29, 2014 identifies subjective complaints of low back pain radiating into the lower extremities. Physical examination findings identify reduced range of motion in the lumbar spine with tender paraspinals. Diagnoses included lumbar spine sprain/strain (illegible), cervical spine (illegible). The treatment plan recommends continuing current medications, request a lumbar brace, and request aquatic therapy to decrease pain, improve range of motion, and improve activities of daily living. A report dated May 6, 2014 states that the patient did well with pool exercise but moves very slowly making a full exercise routine difficult.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

The Final Determination was based on decisions for the disputed items/services set forth below:

**AQUATIC THERAPY INCLUDING RE-EVAL; THREE(3)TIMES A WEEK FOR FOUR(4) WEEKS:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 298, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 8 C.C.R. 9792.20 - 9792.26 MTUS (Effective July 18, 2009) Page(s): 22, 98-99 OF 127. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Low Back Chapter, Physical Therapy

**Decision rationale:** Regarding the request for aquatic therapy, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines state that aquatic therapy is recommended as an optional form of exercise therapy where available as an alternative to land-based physical therapy. They go on to state that it is specifically recommended whenever reduced weight bearing is desirable, for example extreme obesity. Guidelines go on to state that for the recommendation on the number of supervised visits, see physical therapy guidelines. Within the documentation available for review, there is no documentation indicating why the patient would require therapy in a reduced weight-bearing environment. Furthermore, there is no indication as to how many physical/aquatic therapy sessions the patient has undergone and what specific objective functional improvement has been obtained with the therapy sessions already provided. Finally, there is no statement indicating whether the patient is performing a home exercise program on a regular basis, and whether or not that home exercise program has been modified if it has been determined to be ineffective. In the absence of clarity regarding those issues, the currently requested aquatic therapy is not medically necessary.